

### **EPA's Initial Actions**

On April 22, EPA's regional office (covers Louisiana) began preparations to deploy staff to the Gulf Coast area in support of the Coast Guard's response efforts.

EPA began preparations for air monitoring (controlled burning and particulate matter, VOCs from oil on beaches) several days later and continue daily at this time.

On April 23, EPA participated in the National Response Team meeting on the emerging crisis.

Soon after, EPA Administrator Jackson directed the agency's Emergency Operations Center to begin mobilize. She also directed regional staff to plan in Regions 4 and 6 for full scale involvement on the ground and our regional emergency operations centers was activated.

To date, odor complaints from the Gulf Coast have not been attributed to oil release – per EPA sampling.

On April 28, EPA deployed their twin-engine plane – the ASPECT – to monitor air quality associated with the in situ burn. ASPECT air missions continue to collect chemical, photo and IR (infrared) data in the Gulf Coast area.

April 30, EPA launches site dedicated to EPA's response efforts. [www.epa.gov/bpspill](http://www.epa.gov/bpspill)

### **May 18, 2010, Actions to Date**

#### **EPA personnel activated in regions and headquarters: 139**

- EPA posting data results, helpful text, statement on results: [www.epa.gov/bpspill](http://www.epa.gov/bpspill)

*Air monitoring conducted through May 17, 2010, has found that air quality on the Gulf coastline is normal for this time of year.*

*EPA's analysis of surface water along the coast of Louisiana found nickel elevated above benchmark levels in one sample collected on May 9. This might affect fish and shellfish exposed for an extended period. It is unlikely that the contamination resulted from the BP Spill.*

*Sediment samples taken through May 12, 2010, indicate that there may be risks to aquatic life from pollutants in sediment at some locations. It is unknown whether the sediment contamination resulted from the BP Spill or was already present.*

- On May 18, Administrator Jackson, along with Sec. Salazar and CEQ Chair Nancy Sutley, testified before the Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works.
- OAR, in partnership with R4 and R6, led a conference call with key stakeholder NGOs to discuss EPA's response to date and to discuss how to regularly communicate on oil-spill-related air issues.
- Media interest remains high, with reports on the oil spill capturing national headlines.
  - On May 18, stories on the Loop Current are predominant in the media. Concerns exist about the independent reporting by scientists concerning the subsurface oil and/or plume and potential transference in the Loop Current.
  - On May 16, the *New York Times* published an article, "Giant Plumes of Oil Found Forming under Gulf Of Mexico," that contained incorrect information about some NOAA-funded research. On May 17, NOAA Administrator Lubchenco issued a statement clarifying several important points. This statement has been posted on [epa.gov/bpspill](http://epa.gov/bpspill).

## ***EPA's Response to the BP Oil Release***

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- On May 14, EPA and USCG announced they had authorized BP to use dispersants underwater at the source of the leak. Application of subsea dispersant began at 0230 EDT on May 15.
  - EPA's directive to BP, including the monitoring plan the company must adhere to, is available at [www.epa.gov/bpspill/dispersants](http://www.epa.gov/bpspill/dispersants).
  - A 24-hour subsea dispersant test was completed on May 11. On May 13, the decision on conditional approval of full-scale subsurface dispersant use was elevated to the NRT Chair. NRT supported the conditional approval with an adaptive monitoring program. A USCG/EPA addendum for the directive was completed and signed to address additional requirements as a result of testing data.
  - On May 18, the RV Brooks McCall will return to port for resupply and will not be available for subsurface monitoring. USCG and EPA have agreed to end subsurface dispersant injection by 6 a.m., May 18, and restart at 7 a.m., May 19. **The RV Brooks McCall returned earlier than expected and subsea dispersant application resumed at 11 p.m., May 18.** Another ship, the Explorer, is being retrofitted for deep-water sampling and will be available starting May 22 for 30 days.
- As of May 17, more than 580,000 gallons of dispersants have been applied from the air. On May 15, six aerial applications dispersed more than 14,000 gallons of dispersants. Due to weather conditions, no surface dispersants were applied on May 14.
- On May 13, OSWER AA Mathy Stanislaus and other senior leaders participated in community meetings in Port Sulphur and Dulac, La.
- On May 12, Administrator Jackson held a press conference with subject matter experts to discuss dispersants.
- On May 12, Mathy Stanislaus and other senior HQ leaders participated in a community meeting in Ocean Springs, Miss., with representatives from other federal agencies.
- Administrator Jackson visited Louisiana on May 10 and 11 to participate in a series of meetings and events. On May 10, Deputy Administrator Perciasepe participated in White House meeting w/POTUS.
- EPA deploying regional intergovernmental, community and tribal liaisons to Houma, La.
- EPA established ecological trigger information a "shut down point" of dispersant application for sea urchins, brine shrimp, rotifers (small crustaceans), microscopic aquatic animal and other indicators of the health of a marine environment.
- EPA Region 4 on standby for fish tissue sampling, (NOAA phone request), no formal request to date.
- Air monitoring ongoing in Regions 4&6
  - **On May 18, ASPECT collected data from flights over in-situ burns and also collected data as it flew over coastlines, scanning for oil that may have reached the shore.** Spectral information is expected to be available by May 18. ASPECT is on station in Gulfport, Miss. Inclement weather prevented any flight activities on May 15 or 16.
  - Air sampling data analyzed every 24 hrs. Reviewed daily for field quality analysis, uploaded to EPA HQ for review.
  - Elevated VOC or PM levels of concern immediately reported, none to date.
  - **On May 18, TAGA monitored for dispersants along Louisiana Hwy. 1 from Galliano to Grand Isle. The monitoring assignment is in response to numerous complaints of poor air quality in these areas.** TAGA buses have surveyed all the potential affected counties from western Mississippi to Florida. To date no elevations above typical VOC levels for the areas have been observed.
  - Chalmette operations now have equipment to conduct benzene monitoring if VOC levels exceed the 10 PPM action level.
  - Seven in-situ burns were attempted on May 7; five were successful. No burns took place May 8-16. Four in-situ burns were conducted on May 17.
  - Identified and explained minor data error in reporting elevated levels of hydrogen sulfide. Explanation was added to air data page of [epa.gov/bpspill](http://epa.gov/bpspill). HQ PIO worked with HQ press secretary and EPA press representative at JIC to respond to media inquiries on hydrogen sulfide data.

## ***EPA's Response to the BP Oil Release***

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- EPA boats arrived at Mobile, Ala., May 3, 2010. Ongoing coastal zone water/sediment sampling in Reg 4 & Reg 6. Historical Gulf Coast ecological conditions are being established from the National Coastal Condition Assessment and EPA.
- Post-impact water sampling plans are being discussed among EPA, the States with a May 10 completion date; draft plan was expected on May 7.
  - National Coastline Condition Assessment program: directs coastal sampling every four years with state agencies.
  - 5-7 additional Florida beach locations set for sampling.
  - Five EPA staff from Region 4 are involved in a multi-agency technical group to work on natural resources damage assessment plans for shoreline assessment.
  - R6 is proposing assistance from OW of the additional of a monitoring/sampling design for near shore marine waters for both R4 and R6. OW will examine similar near shore sampling activities by NOAA to evaluate need.
  - R6 is revising sampling plan to include testing for pesticides and PCBs.
  - R4 and R6 requested that OW develop desk statement on EPA position on NPDES permits from discharges from oil/water separators.
  - On May 7, posted desk statement on dispersants to [epa.gov/bpspill](http://epa.gov/bpspill).
  - On May 9, posted sediment data from May 1 and 2. Sampling results indicate that there may be risks to aquatic life near Plaquemines Parish, La.
  - On May 12, posted sediment data from May 6.
  - Water sampling plans are being adjusted to include sampling and analysis of dispersant constituents. The plan was submitted to the Unified Command for review on May 12.
- EPA is prepared to assist USCG and LDEQ with shoreline assessment and cleanup and use of near-shore countermeasures.
- As of May 14, Louisiana has submitted a barrier island proposal to the Army Corps of Engineers. On May 15, Sec. Napolitano requested a review of the legality of Louisiana's proposal to create barrier islands. EPA/OGC and USCG are also coordinating on this issue. As Louisiana is the permitting applicant, the state would be liable for any mishaps if the barrier islands are constructed. Mississippi has significant concerns related to salinity and hydrology changes in coastal waters.
- EPA continues oversight of BP's plans to minimize impact to the environment as response teams deploy boom off the coast of Louisiana and stage to deploy rapid response teams to shorelines affected by oil.
- Region 6 is coordinating with USCG to address volunteer training issues.
- EPA reviewed revised waste management/disposal plan submitted by BP, which was approved by Unified Command. BP will begin to execute the plan.
- EPA Region 4 has a list of possible waste staging areas as research continues on landfill options potential EJ, other surrounding community concerns and issues, and is communicating with state partners.
  - On May 10, EOC solid waste, HQ and Regions 4 and 6 had conference call to discuss EJ concerns regarding waste management facilities. Regional EJ coordinators will identify communities w/EJ concerns based on list of waste management facilities being developed by HQ.
  - EPA is leading a waste group in an established environmental branch of the unified command post.
  - R4 sent revised Alabama-Mississippi-Florida waste plan to state partners and EPA HQ ORCR for comment, and developed preliminary list of facilities that include landfills, hazardous waste-permitted facilities and other potential waste disposal facilities.
  - EPA completed documentation of conditions at six waste staging areas (Biloxi, Miss.; Pascagoula, Miss.; Dauphin Island, Ala.; Orange Beach, Ala.; Pensacola, Fla. and Panama City Beach, Fla.)

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- EPA found no drinking water intakes at risk from oil, researching industrial intakes (not reported to EPA.)
- EPA maintaining contact and working with Governors of the potentially impacted states.
- EPA Emergency Operations center is fully staffed with air, water, waste, and communications teams to review, and post environmental information for the public as quickly as possible.